

**Remarks by Councilmember Marilyn Praisner on her Inauguration
as President of the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo)**

Annapolis, Maryland January 10, 2003

Twelve years ago, when I first was elected to the Montgomery County Council, I knew from the beginning that I wanted to be the County's representative to the Maryland Association of Counties' Legislative Committee. I had had such a positive experience with the Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), including my year as President. I am obviously a firm believer in the value of associations. They provide networking opportunities, fellowship, information, training, and advocacy.

I am really pleased to see the *Washington Post* refer to our organization as "the powerful Maryland Association of Counties." That's not only because it recognizes the significant role that counties and MACo play in this state, but because it inherently acknowledges the hard work of staff and my predecessors who don't get enough recognition.

MACo has not let me down. I have learned a great deal from its wonderful staff, all of you and, in some cases, from your predecessors. I have learned about local government and even about myself. In many ways it has reinforced what I learned through MABE. I have learned that there is no county that can achieve its goals working alone. There is no county in Maryland that has all the answers or for that matter knows all the right questions. I have learned that collaboration, communication, and cooperation --- the 3 "C's" of government service -- have replaced the old ABC's.

Some you know that I grew up in New Jersey and it will always hold a special place in my heart. Thanks to my parents I was imbued with a strong commitment to public service and local government. In high school, which was on split sessions because of space issues, I worked for a City Councilmember. However, even I would have had a hard time telling you what the County Freeholders did.

But I have spent more of my life in Maryland than in New Jersey and that is not going to change. Over the years I have really come to love this State. And as I have traveled around this country and met local elected officials from all over the United States, I have grown in my admiration for the Marylanders who came before us -- who created the government structure we have. We stand on their shoulders. We are 24 local jurisdictions with more in common than not.

Unlike other states --- like my beloved New Jersey -- folks here have a general idea what County Commissioners and Councilmembers do. Unlike some states even smaller than Maryland we can get all our elected officials in one room. From the mountains of Western Maryland to the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean and everything in between, we can touch, we can talk. And more important than we can is that we do!

My father taught me to know the bigger world and he had a special passion in having me learn about China. Well, I love that old Chinese curse -- "May you live in interesting times."

These are more than interesting times. These are challenging times.

They will test our governance structure and our 3 "C's."

But if we keep our focus on what we all want -- a strong Maryland and a stronger future -- and if we maintain our appreciation for each other and our roles and responsibilities, we'll get through it.

Coming together is a beginning.

Working together is progress.

Staying together is success.

Thank you for the honor of serving as your President. I know we have come together, I know we can work together, and with your help, I know we will stay together and succeed.